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C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 002779

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/07/2010

TAGS: ELAB PGOV PL

SUBJECT: LARGEST POLISH TEACHERS UNION BACKS
SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN ELECTIONS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor David Morris.

Reasons: 1.5 (B and D).

¶1. (U) In a surprise move, the Union of Polish Teachers (ZNP) announced on July 6 that it would support the Social Democracy of Poland (SdPl) in fall elections. ZNP followed the far-left Union of Labor (UP) and minuscule Greens 2004 Party, which had earlier signed election alliances with the SdPl. By throwing its lot in with SdPl, ZNP broke ranks with the post-communist All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ), to which ZNP belongs. OPZZ earlier declared its support in elections for the governing Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), and OPZZ National Chairman Jan Guz is likely to run for parliament on the SLD ticket. According to ZNP President Slawomir Broniarz, his union's move was dictated by SdPl's strong support for education in its platform.

¶2. (C) Friction between Broniarz and Guz likely played a role in ZNP's move. The two have been at odds, especially over financial issues and the running of OPZZ. Ideological differences accentuated this conflict: Broniarz comes from a communist reformer background, but Guz is a dyed-in-the-wool member of the SLD unreformed "concrete heads" ("beton") faction. It had appeared that Broniarz and Guz had patched up their differences as they marched together in a recent OPZZ demonstration for government action on labor issues, but now this is clearly not the case.

¶3. (C) The Solidarity Trade Union's decision to work closely with the conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS) in upcoming elections may also have inspired ZNP. While Solidarity has stopped short of fully endorsing PiS, it has agreed to advise the party on labor and social issues, and several Solidarity notables are likely to run on the PiS ticket (among them Solidarity Warsaw Region Chairman Jerzy Wielgus and noted Solidarity social policy expert Ewa Tomaszewska). In private, Solidarity leaders admit that the union's support for PiS will be greater than it appears on the basis of their agreement. For example, Solidarity National Deputy Chairman Maciej Jankowski (PROTECT) told us that if the second round of the presidential elections will be a close contest, the union will issue a statement endorsing PiS candidate Lech Kaczynski (note: Kaczynski is all but certain to make it to the second round).

¶4. (C) Comment. ZNP's defection appears to be a significant blow to OPZZ, if less so for SLD. ZNP is arguably the strongest single union in OPZZ; with approximately 300,000 members, it makes up over 30 percent of OPZZ membership. It is also one of the wealthiest unions in OPZZ, with extensive real estate holdings and commercial activity throughout Poland. For SdPl, ZNP makes a good partner as it provides campaign cadres and office support, which observers have noted that SdPl lacks.

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